

Wylie Bearup: A Champion Of Alternate Delivery

A former lieutenant colonel and city engineer who helped reshape Phoenix is now imparting his skills to a new generation **BY JOEY HANCOCK & JOHN GUZZON**

An illustrious 38-year engineering and management career has kept Wylie Bearup as a central figure in public and private construction in the Southwest. The retired Army lieutenant colonel and city of Phoenix engineer has worked on projects around the globe. He spearheaded the transformation of downtown Phoenix and how the state of Arizona looks at construction delivery methods. Most recently, he has taken on a new challenge to pass on his wealth of knowledge to a new generation of construction professionals.

These efforts led to Bearup's selection as the recipient of the inaugural ENR Southwest Legacy Award.

"He is a fantastic leader," says Kyle Kotchou, deputy aviation director for the city of Phoenix, who nominated Bearup for the Legacy Award due to the impact he has made on the construction industry in Arizona and beyond.

A Call to Duty

Born into a copper mining family in Miami, Ariz., Bearup wanted to become an engineer at an early age. He realized that dream by joining the Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) and attending the University of Arizona in Tucson, where he received a degree in civil engineering.

"I had an interest in math and science and how things worked, so I got into civil engineering as a major for my undergraduate," Bearup says. He received his degree from UA in 1976.

"Since I had accepted an Army ROTC scholarship to go to college, I owed the Army five years of active duty," he says. "After being in that commitment for three or four years, I decided to go back to graduate school, and the Army sent me back to get a master's [degree] in civil engineering. Again, I owed them a commitment for having gone to school and went back on active duty."



By then, Bearup had been in the Army for over a decade, and so he decided to stay in the Army as a career.

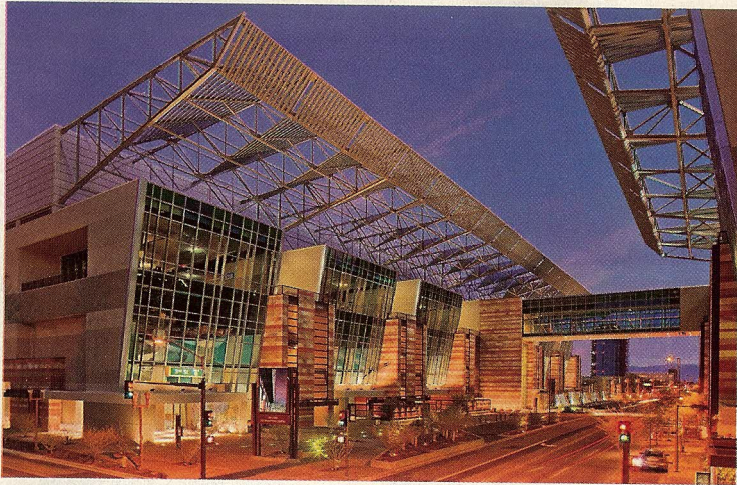
In the early 1990s, Bearup pursued a Ph.D in construction management while he was on active duty and received his Ph.D. in 1995.

Bearup worked for the Los Angeles district of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and was part of numerous large-scale projects, including the \$2.2-billion Santa Ana Mainstem Flood Control Project in Southern California. He also worked on the approximately \$250-million Red Rock flood control system in Las Vegas and the Seven Oaks Dam, a \$700-million project in the San Bernardino mountains.

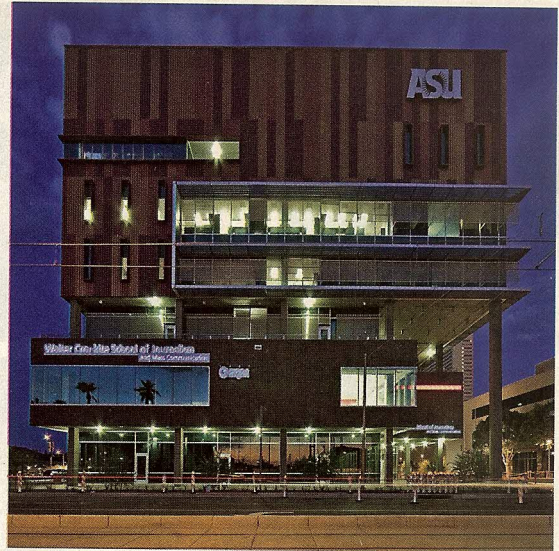
In the Army, Bearup grew up very quickly and had the responsibility of leading other young men to finish projects.

"As a second lieutenant, I was in charge of an engineer platoon with 35 people who I had to direct and

NEW CHALLENGE
After serving as a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and as Phoenix city engineer, Wylie Bearup is now teaching at Arizona State University.



CONVENTION SPACE Bearup was instrumental in the completion of the \$600-million, voter-approved makeover of the Phoenix Convention Center.



CAMPUS VIEWS Arizona State University's presence in downtown Phoenix benefited from Bearup's vision of using the power of alternative delivery methods.

train, motivate and encourage, and with them we built some amazing projects," he says. "At a very young age, I was put in a position of leadership and responsibility for others. That is unique to a military career."

Traveling around the world with the Army also opened Bearup's eyes to new modes of construction, including alternative delivery methods that he first learned about on a family housing project in Saudi Arabia. He would later help the city of Phoenix adopt and use these same methods, the use of which then spread throughout the Southwest.

Dawn of Alternative Delivery

When Bearup returned to Arizona, he was still on active duty. His final assignment was as professor of military science and the head of the Army ROTC program at Arizona State University in Tempe. It was during this time that he helped change legislation in Arizona to provide better methods for construction projects.

"There was a stakeholder group in 1999 that proposed new legislation here in Arizona to provide other methods to do construction other than the traditional low bid or design-bid-build," Bearup says. The new methods included construction manager at-risk, design-build and job-order contracting.

When Bearup retired from the Army and began working as the deputy engineer for the city of Phoenix in 2000, he was able to move quickly to adopt the new methods to build large capital construction projects in the city, he says.

"He had a big impact on the whole surrounding area, the whole state really, on alternate delivery," says Kotchou, who worked closely with Bearup as his project manager for the city of Phoenix. "There really wasn't anyone doing it when we started, and he went out and taught a lot of the local entities how to do it."

In 2004, Bearup became the city engineer for

Phoenix and played a key part in constructing billions of dollars' worth of projects.

"The largest and most challenging was the Phoenix Convention Center expansion," Bearup says. The \$600-million multiphase effort, completed in 2008, nearly tripled the size of the existing facility.

Kotchou says Bearup's demeanor and ability to get people motivated made for a good work environment.

"When I first realized he was going to be my boss, I was a little hesitant with him being from the military. But it wasn't [like] that at all," Kotchou says. "What he did was set the tone and the path, letting people take those ideas and concepts and run with them."

Next Generation

During Bearup's tenure as city engineer, and later as street transportation director, the Phoenix downtown core witnessed a revitalization, with capital construction projects and the addition of a major university campus bringing significant change.

"There are also any number of other various projects that I'm proud of: the ASU School of Journalism, the whole ASU downtown Phoenix campus, 10 or 11 libraries and just a whole rack of smaller but equally important projects," he says.

Bearup, who retired from the city last year, is now the executive director of ASU's Alliance for Construction Excellence and a professor for the university's Del E. Webb School of Construction. He says he is looking forward to teaching the next generation of engineers.

"The work of civil engineers in providing the framework to support society is just so rewarding," Bearup says. He especially appreciates the "satisfaction to be a part of a team that brought about these huge buildings and monuments ... and working together collaboratively to create something that didn't exist before." ■

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